

WASH Technical Operations: Hygiene Promotion

Scope and Application

Objective of the intervention: To encourage communities to adopt safer hygiene practices.

Emergency settings often result in poor hygiene conditions as well as a disruption of normal behavioral patterns. IOM focuses on hygiene promotion as an **immediate** action to prevent the spread of disease, whilst also promoting long-term and **sustainable** behavior change that focuses on changes in practices and perceptions. Hygiene promotion should be contextualized for different situations or disease outbreaks such as cholera, Ebola and COVID-19 which require different and specific messaging to encourage infection prevention and control (IPC).

Hygiene promotion includes engaging and training members of the affected community as hygiene promoters to disseminate information. Hygiene promotion teams should be gender balanced (refer to Gender equity section of Cross-cutting Themes in WASH page) and trained to address sensitive topics, such as menstrual hygiene management (MHM). The hygiene promoters should be appointed through participatory approaches. While incentives in cash or in-kind may need to be provided, the nature of the engagement should be on a voluntary basis with the aim of having flexible time dedication to allow voluntary hygiene promoters to also practice their routine livelihoods.

Hygiene promoters can also be available at government level, in which case this should be coordinated through the WASH Cluster, seeking to complement what is already being done and avoid duplication or mixed messaging. Any engaged volunteer hygiene promoters should also be linked with government structures to ensure **sustainability** post exit.

Hygiene promotion training should be delivered by knowledgeable public health personnel, experienced in facilitating training for communities. Hygiene promotion can cover a range of topics including proper hand-washing, handling of children's faeces, importance of the safe water chain (collection, transport, storage, household water treatment and use), MHM, IPC for disease outbreaks and/or referrals to various other services (e.g. sexual health). Proper handwashing when performed at critical times is the most effective way to prevent infectious diseases, so therefore is often the key message in any hygiene promotion activity. However, messages can be adopted for different contexts, for example, in the case of COVID-19 messages relayed were to promote physical distancing, **appropriate** personal protective equipment, cleaning and disinfection, as well as proper hand hygiene. Motivation and barriers to handwashing should be assessed in the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) survey (refer to Needs and risk assessments section of WASH Programming page) so they can be addressed through hygiene promotion.

Hygiene promotion should be accompanied by the supply of WASH non-food item (NFI)/hygiene kits (inclusive of MHM items when appropriate) to allow hygiene promotion messages to be implemented. Similarly, (as outlined in Management of WASH NFIs section of WASH Technical Operations: Drainage, Vector Control and Management of WASH NFIs page), no NFI kits should be provided without proper hygiene education to ensure proper use. This can include simple Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials such as instructions on proper use of hygiene kit items, or specific hygiene awareness sessions.

Promotion of good hygiene should be delivered through several communication channels. The design of the IEC materials should consider the context, cultural background and ideally, evidence-based research to successfully achieve the desired impact, making sure pictures are as accurate as possible and familiar to the audience. Predominately, IEC materials are paper-based (posters, booklets, leaflets), though other audiovisual media such as videos, radio messages and songs could be used to provide an illustrative depiction to encourage or deter certain hygiene practices.

Links

- [SPHERE Standards, Hygiene Promotion](#)
- [Global WASH Cluster: Hygiene Promotion Zip Drive \(various contributors\)](#)

Media



[Approaches to deliver IOM WASH in emergencies](#)

References and Tools

- [WHO Technical Note on Hygiene Promotion in Emergencies](#)
- [WEDC Hygiene Promotion Booklet](#)
- [IOM WASH Technical Guidance - Risk Communication and Community Engagement](#)
- [IOM WASH Technical Guidance - Handwashing](#)
- [WASH Cluster's Introduction to Hygiene Promotion - Tools and Approaches](#)
- [IOM WASH Hygiene Promotion Training Curriculum](#)
- [Compendium of Hygiene Promotion in Emergencies \(2021\)](#)

Other Entries in this Topic

- [Water, Sanitation and Hygiene \(WASH\)](#)
- [WASH Approaches](#)
- [Cross-Cutting Themes within WASH](#)
- [WASH Programming](#)
- [WASH Technical Operations: Drainage, Vector Control, Management of WASH NFIs](#)

Contacts

IOM's Global WASH Support Team is available to support country missions in a variety of ways as outlined in the IOM Global WASH Support Team mechanisms, including surge support, remote support and/or monitoring, evaluation and learning.

The Global WASH Support Team can be contacted for additional information or specific guidance at washsupport@iom.int.

Document last updated: Oct 2022